

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 IGA-02 EB-05 L-03 SSO-00 SS-07 PM-03

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O P 311312 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1337

INFO COMSIXTHFLT

CINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

CINCUSAFE ADVON RAMSTEIN AB GER

USINT ALGIERS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

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AIDAC FOR AID DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: SWEL, TS

SUBJ: SITREP NO. 5 - DISASTER RELIEF TUNISIA

1. ON MARCH 30, USAID DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR ORGANIZED AN ALL DAY AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE TO SURVEY FLOOD DAMAGE TO MEDJERDA RIVER VALLEY. TEAM CONSISTED OF USAID AND EMBASSY STAFF, USS FORESTAL DOCTOR, AND CARE DIRECTOR. OUR CONCLUSION FROM ALL DAY SURVEY IS THAT GOT ESTIMATE OF 40,000 HONELESS IS PROBABLY CORRECT. IT ALSO APPEARS THAT MAJOR EFFORT WILL BE REQUIRED TO MOUNT CLEANUP CAMPAIGN IN URBAN AREAS AND PROVIDE RELIEF FOOD AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO EVACUEES OF FLOODED AREA BUT AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL AT THIS DATE, STRUCTURAL DAMAGE TO BUILDINGS HAS NOT AS YET BEEN A MAJOR PROBLEM. FOLLOWING ARE OUR OBSERVATIONS

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BY CATEGORY: PHYSICAL DAMAGE, AGRICULTURAL DAMAGE, FOOD REQUIREMENTS, AND MEDICAL SITUATION.

2. PHYSICAL DAMAGE. IN OVERFLYING MEDJERDA, WE OBSERVED FLOOD ALL ALONG RIVER VALLEY FROM TOWN OF JENDOUBA, 150 MILES WEST OF TUNIS, TO THE SEA. MAJOR FLOOD DAMAGE HOWEVER, BEGINS AT MEDJEZ EL BAB THROUGH TEBOURBA AND DJEDIEDA WITH FAST MOVING WATERS IN SOME PLACES, APPARENTLY SEVERAL METERS DEEP, MOVING THROUGH ALL OR PARTS OF THESE TOWNS AND COVERING ROUGHLY ONE HALF OF LOWER MEDJERDA VALLEY. NO MAJOR BUILDINGS APPEARED FROM THE AIR TO HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BY FLOOD WATERS ALTHOUGH WE NOTICED ROOFS MISSING FROM A FEW LARGE HOMES IN LOWER VALLEY. IN UPPER VALLEY, APPROXIMATELY 10-20 SMALL EARTHEN GOURBI DWELLINGS WERE COMPLETELY DESTROYED BY FLOOD WATERS. IN OVERFLIGHT OF VALLEY FROM JENDOUBA TO THE SEA, WE NOTICED TOTAL OF APPROXIMATELY 30 GOURBI DWELLINGS COMPLETELY DESTROYED, ANOTHER 25 BADLY DAMAGED.

AT LEAST FIVE BRIDGES WERE OBSERVED TO BE TOTALLY OR PARTIALLY DESTROYED IN THE VALLEY (THREE COMPLETELY DESTROYED BY FLOOD WATERS AND APPROACHES TO TWO OTHERS WASHED OUT). WHILE THERE WAS NO SIGN OF POWER LINES DOWN, TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS HAVE BEEN CUT THROUGH ALL OR PARTS OF THE FLOODED AREA.

3. AGRICULTURAL DAMAGE. IT APPEARS THAT ONE THIRD TO ONE HALF OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS COMPLETELY FLOODED IN LOWER VALLEY. IN ADDITION, SEVERAL HUNDRED SQUARE MILES OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS IN BOTH UPPER AND LOWER VALLEYS WILL HAVE SUFFERED PARTIAL DAMAGE FROM HEAVY RAINS. THERE HAVE BEEN EXTENSIVE LAND SLIDES IN SOME AREAS ALTHOUGH MOST SLOPES IN THE VALLEY AREA HAVE BEEN REASONABLY WELL PROTECTED WHERE CROPS ARE PLANTED. THERE IS EVIDENCE OF EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO FARM BUILDINGS IN THE LOWER VALLEY WITH SEVERAL COMBINES, TRACTORS, FARM BUILDINGS OBSERVED PARTIALLY SUBMERGED IN FLOOD WATERS. WHILE IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO ESTIMATE PRECISE DAMAGE UNTIL THE FLOOD WATERS RECEDE, CLEARLY FARM ROADS, IRRIGATION CONDUITS AND DRAINAGE SYSTEMS IN THE LOWER VALLEY HAVE BEEN EXTENSIVELY DAMAGED BY THE FLOODS. WHILE ONLY A FEW HORSES AND CATTLE WERE OBSERVED TO BE STRANDED AND SEVERAL HERDS WERE NOTICED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ON HIGH GROUND WHERE SUFFICIENT FOOD EXISTS, WE WOULD ESTI-

MATE THAT SINCE THE FLOOD WATERS ROSE SO RAPIDLY OVER LAST SEVERAL DAYS, APPROXIMATELY 5-10 PERCENT OF LIVESTOCK IN THE LOWER VALLEY WAS PROBABLY LOST. WE OBSERVED SEVERAL HUNDRED HECTARES OF OLIVE TREES PARTIALLY SUBMERGED AND THEIR SURVIVAL WILL DEPEND ON HOW RAPIDLY FLOOD WATERS RECEDE. THIS YEAR'S CEREAL CROP MAY BE OFF AS MUCH AS 20-25 PERCENT DUE TO FLOOD DAMAGE.

4. FOOD SITUATION. IT IS OUR ESTIMATE THAT SUFFICIENT FOOD SUPPLIES EXIST IN- COUNTRY INCLUDING GOT STOCKS, TITLE II, AND WFP STOCKS TO HANDLE THE SITUATION FOR THE TIME BEING. THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM IS A LOGISTICAL ONE AND WE AND OTHER DONORS HAVE BEEN CONCENTRATING ON THIS PROBLEM THROUGH OUR AIRLIFT ASSISTANCE. THE GOT HAS REQUESTED ACCESS TO OUR TITLE II STOCKS IN COUNTRY AND WE AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES HAVE AUTHORIZED THEIR USE. WE HAVE NO ESTIMATE AS YET OF THE AMOUNT OF TITLE II COMMODITIES TO BE DIVERTED TO THE DISASTER RELIEF EFFORT AND ARE NOW IN PROCESS TODAY OF ASCERTAINING THIS NEED.

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5. HEALTH SITUATION. THE GOT ESTIMATE THAT 80-100 HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE FLOOD IS PROBABLY ACCURATE. IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH HEALTH ADMINISTRATORS IN TWO FLOODED GOUVERNORATS, WE WERE TOLD THAT THERE WERE NOT PEPEAT NOT LARGE NUMBERS OF INJURED PERSONS AS RESULT OF THE FLOOD. OF THE ROUGHLY 40,000 HOMELESS, THE PRINCIPAL NEED IS FOR PURE WATER, FOOD, BLANKETS, AND SHELTER. WITH ASSISTANCE ALREADY PROVIDED OR COMMITTED, WE BELIEVE THE GOT NOW HAS THE CAPACITY TO MEET THIS NEED FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS. CONTAMINATION OF WELLS AND URBAN WATER SUPPLIES, PARTICULARLY IN THE LOWER VALLEY, MAY BE A PROBLEM OVER THE COMING WEEKS BUT THE EXTENT OF SUCH DAMAGE CANNOT BE ESTIMATED UNTIL THE FLOOD WATERS RECEDE. THE GOT APPARENTLY HAS SUFFICIENT CHOLERA AND TYPHOID VACCINE ON HAND AND HAS TO DATE MADE NO REQUEST FOR US ASSISTANCE IN THE AREA. WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT WHO IS AIR FREIGHTING

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HALIZONE TABLETS AT REQUEST OF THE GOT. IN SUM, SUFFICIENT MEDICAL SUPPLIES NOW APPEAR TO BE AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOT OR COMMITTED BY DONOR COUNTRIES TO MEET THE EMERGENCY IN THE IMMEDIATE DAYS AHEAD. WHILE WE ASSUME THE GOT WILL BE ORGANIZING A VACCINATION PROGRAM OVER COMING WEEKS, NO SPECIFIC REQUEST HAS BEEN MADE FOR US ASSISTANCE IN THIS AREA.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS. THE ABOVE ANALYSIS IS OBVIOUSLY VERY PRELIMINARY AND A BETTER ESTIMATE CERTAINLY OF PHYSICAL AND AGRICULTURAL DAMAGE WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE FOR SEVERAL DAYS. IT APPEARS TO US, HOWEVER, THAT THE MAJOR IMMEDIATE NEED IS LOGISTICAL, I. E., MOVING TEMPORARY SHELTER, BLANKETS, AND PURE WATER TO THE EVACUEES. IN THE WEEKS AHEAD, AS FLOOD WATERS RECEDE, WE WOULD FORESEE A MAJOR CLEANUP EFFORT REQUIRED, PARTICULARLY IN THE URBAN AREAS AFFECTED, ROAD AND BRIDGE RECONSTRUCTION, AND REPAIR WORK TO IRRIGATION SYSTEMS. MORE PRECISE ESTIMATE OF LIVESTOCK AND OTHER LOSSES IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR WILL ALSO BE POSSIBLE AS WATER LEVEL FALLS. NO COUNTERACT EFFECT OF FLOODS ON THOSE CROP AREAS NOT COMPLETELY DESTROYED, THE GOT SHOULD BE URGING THE FARMERS TO USE NITROGEN FERTILIZER ON WHEAT AND OTHER GRAIN CROPS. WE ANTICIPATE ORGANIZING SUBSEQUENT AERIAL AND ON- GROUND SURVEYS IN DAYS AHEAD TO DEVELOP MORE ACCURATE ASSESSMENT AND TEST INITIAL FINDINGS REPORTED THIS MESSAGE.

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